

MEDIA RELEASE

CLARE TOURISM FORUM SEEKS TO ATTRACT INCREASED VISITOR NUMBERS TO CLARE IN 2007

- New brand identity and logo for Clare tourism to be launched at Gala Dinner

County Clare, IRELAND, Tuesday 2nd January 2007 – The Clare Tourism Forum has called on all sectors of the local tourism industry to play their part in establishing County Clare as a domestic and international tourist destination in 2007. The Forum, which consists of a public/private organisation partnership, claims that an increase in visitors to Clare can only be achieved through a collaborative and strategic approach by the county's leading tourism agencies and operators to sustaining and developing tourism within the county.

According to Forum Chairperson Cllr. Richard Nagle, *“7.5 million tourists visited Ireland in 2006, generating around 6 billion Euro for the economy. The spatial spread of tourism, however, remains a concern with much of the tourist spend focused on the eastern seaboard of Ireland. The task for tourism bodies, such as the Clare Tourism Forum, is to devise a marketing strategy to reverse that trend. I am confident that the Forum's strategic and collaborative approach will result in a sustained increase in visitor numbers to Clare in 2007 and will reinforce the county's growing status as a domestic and international tourist destination alike.”*

He continued, *“A total commitment of EUR 110,000 will be used to fund the Forum's upcoming integrated business development programme targeting Clare's tourism numbers for 2007. Three separate campaigns for spring, summer and autumn will be launched.”*

‘Tourism Brand Clare’ - a marketing campaign targeting tourist markets at home and abroad - will be launched by the Forum at a Gala Black Tie Banquet in Dromoland Castle on Friday 12th January 2007. The action plan, which has been developed in association with Clare County Council, is the result of months of market research and follows on from the Forum's successful Summer 2006 campaign to promote Clare to the local and national tourist market. A new logo for Clare tourism will also be launched during the Gala Dinner.

Commenting on the initiative, Forum member Siobhán Curran of Kilrush Town Council stated, *“The Clare Tourism Forum intends to build brand awareness of the new Clare Tourism Brand over the coming year and through an innovative marketing campaign attract additional visitors and bed nights to Clare. We are confident that members of the tourism industry and wider business community in Clare will embrace the new Clare brand and support the marketing drive dedicated to our county.”*

Ms. Bernadette Kinsella, Director of Service, Economic Development and Planning, Clare County Council expressed confidence in the ‘*Tourism Brand Clare*’ initiative and the overall success of Irish tourism in 2007.

She said, *“Those involved in Clare’s tourist sector face many challenges to capture and increase visitor numbers to the county as it is operating in an extremely competitive and commercial market place. I am confident, however, that the Forum’s action plan for 2007 will help position Clare as a competitive and appealing destination in the domestic and international business tourism market through a spirit of collaboration between all of its members.”*

“Tourism is hugely important to the economy in county Clare which is why I would encourage all beneficiaries of Clare’s growing tourism sector to attend the upcoming gala dinner. Everyone from retailers and financial institutions to accommodation and direct tourism providers can play their part in supporting the local sector by attending the event. Places are limited so anyone interested in attending should book their ticket as soon as possible”, Ms. Kinsella concluded.

According to Clare Tourism Forum member, Paul Madden of The Temple Gate Hotel, *“As an alternative to seeking funding from tourism operators, it is hoped that the Gala Dinner will result in a total of EUR30,000 being raised on the night. Clare County Council will pledge EUR40,000 to the initiative while an additional EUR40,000 will be provided by Fáilte Ireland, subject to a successful application for funding.”*

Details of Gala Dinner tickets and sponsorship are available from Ailish McMahon on 065 6846401 aimcmahon@clarecoco.ie or Mary Moroney on 065 6846537 mmoroney@clarecoco.ie.

The Clare Tourism Forum was established in November 2005 with the objective of mobilising a collaborative strategy to sustain and develop tourism within the county. Its membership includes representatives of the principle agencies involved in tourism promotion in Clare in partnership with representatives of the hotel, vintners and B+B sectors as well as the main local tourism attractions.

-ENDS-

Note to Editors:

- To arrange an interview please contact Mark Dunphy of Dunphy Public Relations on 00353-868534900 or email media@dunphypr.com. Pictures are available on request.